

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A vending machine, comprising:
 - a first product dispensing unit configured for dispensing packaged pizza crust product;
 - 5 a second product dispensing unit configured for dispensing packaged pizza topping product; and
 - an apparatus coupled to the first product dispensing unit and the second dispensing unit, wherein the apparatus is configured for facilitating input and processing of a customer-configured pizza preparation kit order.
- 10 2. The machine of claim 1 wherein:
 - the first product dispensing unit is a frozen product dispensing unit; and
 - the second product dispensing unit is a refrigerated product dispensing unit.
- 15 3. The machine of claim 1 wherein:
 - the first product dispensing unit includes a plurality of packaged pizza crust product dispensers; and
 - the second product dispensing unit includes a plurality of packaged pizza topping product dispensers.
- 20 4. The machine of claim 1 wherein:
 - the first product dispensing unit is configured for enabling different types of packaged pizza crust product to be selectively dispensed; and
 - the second product dispensing unit is configured for enabling different types of packaged pizza topping product to be selectively dispensed.
- 25 5. The machine of claim 1 wherein the apparatus includes:
 - an user interface arrangement configured for enabling input and payment of the customer-configured pizza preparation kit order; and

an order processing arrangement configured for determining pizza kit components of the customer-configured pizza preparation kit order, preparing component-specific preparation instructions and controlling dispensing of said kit components.

- 5 6. The machine of claim 5 wherein the apparatus includes a kit component management arrangement configured for managing kit component inventory.

7. A vending machine, comprising:

an user interface arrangement configured for facilitating input of a customer-configured pizza preparation kit order;

an order processing arrangement configured for processing the customer-configured pizza preparation kit order; and

a product dispensing arrangement configured for dispensing a customer-configured pizza preparation kit corresponding to said order.

8. The machine of claim 7 wherein the product dispensing arrangement includes:

a first product dispensing unit configured for dispensing packaged pizza crust product comprised by the customer-configured pizza preparation kit;

a second product dispensing unit configured for dispensing packaged pizza topping product comprised by the customer-configured pizza preparation kit.

9. The machine of claim 8 wherein:

the first product dispensing unit is a frozen product dispensing unit; and

the second product dispensing unit is a refrigerated product dispensing unit.

10. The machine of claim 8 wherein:

the first product dispensing unit includes a plurality of packaged pizza crust product dispensers; and

the second product dispensing unit includes a plurality of packaged pizza topping product dispensers.

11. The machine of claim 8 wherein:

the first product dispensing unit is configured for enabling different types of packaged pizza crust product to be selectively dispensed; and the second product dispensing unit is configured for enabling different types of packaged pizza topping product to be selectively dispensed.

5 12. The machine of claim 7 wherein said processing includes determining pizza kit components of the customer-configured pizza preparation kit order, preparing component-specific preparation instructions and controlling dispensing of said kit components.

10 13. The machine of claim 7, further comprising:
a kit component management arrangement configured for managing kit component inventory.

15 14. The machine of claim 7 wherein the order processing arrangement is configured for:
processing payment of said order;
displaying a visual representation of a pizza corresponding to said order; and
controlling dispensing of kit components comprised by said order.

20 15. The machine of claim 7 wherein:
the user interface includes a visual display; and
the order processing arrangement includes means for displaying a visual
representation of a pizza corresponding to said order on the visual display.

16. A vending machine, comprising:

means for determining kit components of a customer-configured pizza preparation kit;

means for preparing component-specific preparation instructions for the customer-configured pizza preparation kit order; and

means for dispensing said kit components and said preparation instructions.

17. The machine of claim 16 wherein said means for determining kit components includes a apparatus configured for facilitating input and processing of a customer-configured pizza preparation kit order.

18. The machine of claim 16 wherein said means for dispensing said kit components includes:

a first product dispensing unit configured for dispensing packaged pizza crust product; and

a second product dispensing unit configured for dispensing packaged pizza topping product.

19. The machine of claim 18 wherein:

the first product dispensing unit is a frozen product dispensing unit; and

the second product dispensing unit is a refrigerated product dispensing unit.

20. The machine of claim 18 wherein:

the first product dispensing unit includes a plurality of pizza crust dispensers; and

the second product dispensing unit includes a plurality pizza topping dispensers.

21. The machine of claim 18 wherein:

the first product dispensing unit is configured for enabling different types of
packaged pizza crust product to be selectively dispensed; and

the second product dispensing unit is configured for enabling different types of
packaged pizza topping product to be selectively dispensed.

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22. The machine of claim 16, further comprising:

means for managing kit component inventory.

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23. A method configured for vending a customer-configured pizza preparation kit,
comprising:

facilitating input of a customer-configured pizza preparation kit order;
processing the customer-configured pizza preparation kit order; and
5 dispensing kit components corresponding to said order.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein facilitating input of said order includes facilitating a
system-driven kit configuration process.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the system-driven kit component configuration process
includes:

10 performing query-response interaction for enabling selection of kit components
comprised by said order; and
performing image-enhanced order confirmation.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein said image-enhanced order confirmation includes
displaying a visual representation of a pizza corresponding to said order.

15 27. The method of claim 23 wherein processing said order includes:

determining kit components of said order;
preparing component-specific preparation instructions for said order; and
controlling dispensing said kit components and said preparation instructions.

28. The method of claim 23 wherein processing said order includes preparing component-
20 specific preparation instructions for said order.

29. The method of claim 23 wherein dispensing the customer-configured pizza preparation kit includes selectively dispensing kit components comprised by said order.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein selectively dispensing said kit components includes selectively dispensing packaged pizza crust product and packaged pizza topping product.

5 31. The method of claim 23 wherein dispensing said kit components includes outputting respective signals to:

a first product dispensing unit configured for dispensing packaged pizza crust product comprised by a customer-configured pizza preparation kit corresponding to said order; and

10 a second product dispensing unit configured for dispensing packaged pizza topping product comprised by a customer-configured pizza preparation kit corresponding to said order.

32. A method configured for vending a customer-configured pizza preparation kit,
comprising:

determining kit components of a customer-configured pizza preparation kit;
preparing component-specific preparation instructions for the customer-
5 configured pizza preparation kit order; and
dispensing said kit components and said preparation instructions.

33. The method of claim 32 wherein determining said kit components includes facilitating a
system-driven kit configuration process.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein the system-driven kit component configuration process
10 includes:

performing query-response interaction for enabling selection of kit components
comprised by said order; and
performing image-enhanced order confirmation.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein said image-enhanced order confirmation includes
15 displaying a visual representation of a pizza corresponding to said order.

36. The method of claim 32 wherein dispensing said kit components includes outputting
respective signals for controlling a first product dispensing unit configured for dispensing
packaged pizza crust product and a second product dispensing unit configured for
dispensing packaged pizza topping product.

20 37. The machine of claim 32 wherein dispensing said kit components includes dispensing:

one of a plurality of different types of packaged pizza crust product; and
one of a plurality of different types of packaged pizza topping product.

38. A packaged pizza crust product, comprising:

a preformed pizza crust;

a pizza crust product packaging article including a sealed portion having the
preformed pizza crust disposed therein; and

a pizza topping product packaging article attached to the pizza crust product
packaging article.

39. The product of claim 38 wherein the pizza topping product packaging article includes a
cavity therein, an open end and means for enabling the open end to be secured in a closed
position.

40. The product of claim 38 wherein the pre-formed pizza crust is vacuum-sealed within said
pizza crust packaging article.

41. The product of claim 38 wherein the topping product packaging article is formed
integrally with the pizza crust product packaging article.

42. The product of claim 41 wherein:

the topping product packaging article and the pizza crust product packaging article
are formed from polymeric sheet material; and

a perforation is formed in said sheet material between the topping product
packaging article and the pizza crust product packaging article.

43. The product of claim 38 wherein:

the topping product packaging article and the pizza crust product packaging article
are discrete articles; and
the pizza topping product packaging article is mounted on the pizza crust product
packaging article.

- 5 44. The product of claim 38, further comprising:
machine-readable indicia on at least one of the pizza crust product packaging
article and the pizza topping product packaging article, wherein said
machine readable indicia designates information enabling kit component
inventory management functionality.

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